

Xpress Has Departed the Fix

HELLO EVERYONE. We launched the latest release of the Document Imaging and Workflow System (DIWS), FAA MedXPress (Xpress), on the West Coast on April 16.

XPress will be available to the central part of the country in mid-May, and everyone else in mid-June. For those of you who have not heard about XPress, don't be alarmed. You will receive a lot more information about it in the coming weeks. XPress allows pilots to fill out their Application for Airman Medical Certificate, FAA Form 8500-8, online; and then transmit it directly into DIWS. When the airman arrives at your office, you can call up the form in your system and use it to complete the physical.

Paperless Process Planned

Our goal is to eventually have a system that is entirely paperless. In fact, it is already possible to accomplish an exam using without paper if both you and the



airman elect to do so. However, I realize that this is a giant leap, so we are starting slow. Neither you nor the airman is presently required to use XPress.

For the airmen who want to use it, we are recommending that they print a paper copy and bring it with them to your office. If you are prepared to use XPress, you can retrieve the electronic version from our Web site, complete the physical, document your findings, and transmit the completed exam to us without ever touching a piece of paper. If your office is not ready to take the total electronic leap, you can have the airman "do it the old-fashioned way."

Further Refinements Coming

I think you will also be glad to know that we are currently working on another release that will allow you to print certificates. We are very excited about XPress. It will help speed up the physical examination process, reduce transmission errors, and make us all more efficient.

Operation Safe Pilot

In 2004, the Inspectors General from the Department of Transportation and the Social Security Administration jointly initiated an investigation in central and northern California called *Operation Safe Pilot*. Their purpose was to determine if there were people who were fraudulently collecting Social Security benefits for total disability and/or falsifying their FAA medical applications. Indeed, they actually found such individuals, and as a result, federal

criminal charges were filed against 45 airmen for: Social Security fraud, making and delivering a false official writing, and making false statements to a government agency. These pilots had their airman and medical certificates revoked, paid monetary fines, and were placed on probation; a few were convicted of Social Security fraud.

The foundation of the medical certification system is truthfulness. We must be able to rely on the information provided to us by our airmen. I believe that the system is inherently safe because most people are honest. However, at least in California, some people were willing to break the law and risk their flying privileges, their reputations, and possibly their flying careers by falsifying their medical certificate applications. Such falsifications could also have affected the safety of the National Airspace System.

FAA medical certification history shows that we are able to medically qualify most applicants, even those with potentially disqualifying medical conditions. The unfortunate California experience demonstrates that there are significant consequences when an applicant falsifies his or her medical certificate application.

Please discuss this issue with your applicants when they come to your office for their examination. Inform them about these events, and let them know that we will do everything we can to help them become medically certified. You should also let them know that once they have falsified their medical certificate application, there is no way to turn back. In my opinion, the risk is not worth it!

New Regional Flight Surgeon in Southern

On a much more pleasant note, I want to take this opportunity to announce that we have a new Southern Regional Flight Surgeon. **Susan Northrup** took over the reins on April 30 from **David Millett**, who retired in January. Susan is a wonderful addition to our FAA team, and I know you will have fun working with her. You can read all about her on page 3 of this issue.

—Fred

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